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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to develop a method to evaluate the effectiveness of Project CODE (Collaborating on Drug Education), a parent education program in drug prevention. Project CODE was designed to use parents, in collaboration with professional educators, as teachers of other parents. Teams of two parents and two educators received 60 hours of training in substance abuse prevention, collaboration skills, and how to work as facilitators within schools and communities for drug prevention. These teams returned to their own schools to provide 10-hour substance abuse prevention workshops to local parents and facilitate development of local programs. Two to 6 months after training, follow-up telephone surveys were administered to 32 Project CODE parents who had received the 10 hours of training and to 34 comparison group parents who had not received training. The results showed significantly higher scores for CODE parents. There were too few items assessing parent behavior to test differences between CODE and comparison groups on behavior. Differences in scores on knowledge items were found to be significant in favor of CODE parents. Twenty-one of the 32 CODE parents were surveyed again 1 year following training. Average scores were lower than in the original survey; only scores on knowledge items were significantly lower. (NB)

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Evaluating Long-term Changes in Project CODE Parents' Drug Prevention Knowledge and Behavior

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Evaluating Long-term Changes in Project Code Parents' Drug Prevention Knowledge and Behavior

Overview

The purpose for the study reported here was to develop a method to evaluate a parent education program in drug prevention, Project CODE (Collaborating on Drug Education), a program funded by the U. S. Office of Education in a grant to San Diego State University (Mendoza, et al., 1990). The evaluation model needed to serve the dual purposes of reporting to the funding agency and being replicable by future program adopters. The program design was a trainer-of-trainers model, with Parent/Teacher Teams using their facilitation training to provide substance abuse prevention training to parents in school settings.

The particular aspect of the evaluation to be discussed in this paper is the development and results of a parent follow-up procedure to judge the effectiveness of the Teams in changing long-term knowledge and behaviors of parents who attended their training workshops. The entire evaluation report, from which this paper is excerpt and amended, was presented to the funding agencies earlier (Hodik, 1990). It includes methods for evaluating training sessions and attitudes and program adoption plans of administrators, and reports program development efforts in relation to funding proposal objectives.

Program Description

Project CODE was designed to use parents as teachers of other parents, with professional educators, familiar with the educational system, to co-train and facilitate interaction with the school. Teams of two parents and two educators from various schools received 60 hours of training in substance abuse prevention, collaboration skills, and how to work as facilitators within schools and communities for drug prevention. These Parent/Teacher Facilitation Teams returned to their own schools to provide 10-hour substance abuse prevention workshops to local parents and facilitate development of local programs.

The 10-hour and 60-hour substance abuse prevention and facilitation trainings were developed using methodologies suited for adult learners, are highly interactive, experiential, and use a wide variety of training strategies. In addition to information about drugs and their use, the training included risk factors for adolescent substance abuse (Hawkins, Lishner, Catalano, & Howard, 1989), parenting styles and children's self-esteem (Streit, Halstead, & Pascale, 1974), families' reactions to stress (Curran, 1985), and traits of a healthy family (Curran, 1983). The emphasis of the program was on prevention through increased parent knowledge and changing ways families interact and behave (Glenn & Neisen, 1988).

Methodology

Keeping in mind the secondary purpose of developing a method which could be used by future groups who chose to adopt the program, the evaluation design used a

follow-up telephone survey with a randomly selected comparison group. The survey was conducted, not of Parent/Teacher Teams who received direct training from Project CODE Trainers, but of parents who had completed the 10-hour substance abuse prevention workshop presented by these trained Parent/Teacher Teams. The surveys were conducted two to six months after completion of training to give parents time to implement changes learned in the training and to determine what knowledge gained during the training was retained. The reason for the differences in the amount of lapse time between training and the follow-up survey was that Parent/Teacher Teams provided training in their own schools according to their own calendars and needs. The survey was conducted over a four-week period, which fell six months after some parents had completed training, but only two months after others had finished. Even in such a short period after training, several families had moved. All participants who still lived in the area, and who had completed at least three of five workshop sessions, were contacted.

Comparison groups of parents were surveyed during the same time period. For the junior high and senior high schools in the study, a comparison group from the same schools was randomly selected from complete school rosters. For the elementary schools, a different school from within the district was selected as a comparison, using socioeconomic factors, percent of Limited English Proficient students, and annual norm-referenced test results as indicators of comparability. Parents selected were informed by letter from the principal that they might be contacted to participate in a research study. Surveyors contacted an approximately equal number of comparison group parents as participant parents.

For the original evaluation study, parents were also surveyed a second time one year following completion of the training. Results of this second survey were compared with the original survey results for the same parents.

See the attached chart of the training and evaluation design.

The survey consisted of eight questions which assess both knowledge and behavior of parents. For example, one knowledge question was "What are the gateway drugs which open the door to later drug abuse?" A behavior question was "As a parent, what are you doing to prevent drug use in your family?" The survey content was developed jointly by the four authors based directly on the training curriculum with the assistance of the evaluator. It was modified after field-testing. Raw score points were awarded based on a scoring rubric giving 1/2 to one point for each correct response.

The survey was conducted over the telephone by trained staff independent of the program during evening hours. An interview protocol, including introductory explanations, was followed to ensure standardized administration. Responses were recorded and scored after all surveys had been completed. Free response items were scored jointly by the surveyors to ensure inter-rater agreement.

Raw scores of participating parents and comparison group parents were compared using a one-tailed *t* test. One-year follow-up scores of participants were compared with their original scores, testing differences on knowledge and behavior items separately.

Results

A comparison of average raw scores of 32 Project CODE parents and 34 comparison group parents showed significantly higher scores for CODE parents. Largest differences were between parents of elementary children. Because of the small number surveyed in some groups, it was not possible to test differences among groups at different levels, however.

Table 1
Average Raw Scores on Follow-up Survey

School Level of Children	CODE		Comparison	
	Number Surveyed	Average Score	Number Surveyed	Average Score
Elementary	16	14.3	18	8.6
Junior High	10	12.6	10	7.7
Senior High	6	11.5	6	8.6
TOTAL	32	13.2*	34	8.4*

* $t = 5.69$; $p < .001$

Although average scores were higher for CODE parents on both knowledge and behavior items, there were too few items assessing behavior to test differences between CODE and comparison groups. Differences in scores on knowledge items were found to be significant in favor of CODE-trained parents.

Twenty-one of the 32 CODE parents were again surveyed one year following training using the same survey. Average scores on both knowledge and behavior items were lower than in the original study. Only scores on knowledge items were significantly lower, however ($t = 2.25$; $p < .05$).

Discussion

This evaluation presented several challenges. Trainer-of-trainer models often assess the effectiveness of training trainers, but seldom assess the effectiveness of the trainers with the ultimate audience for the training, in this case parents. Parents are not an easy audience to capture, either for training or for evaluation activities. In this study a telephone survey was used, allowing repeated attempts to obtain data at no cost and minimal disruption to families. To provide an evaluation model which could be used without a professional evaluator, this study was kept methodologically simple. Evaluation efforts often use affective measures to judge program effectiveness. In this study parents' knowledge and behaviors were assessed based on research showing that these were more likely to result in prevention of drug use. The results of this study, showing long-term decreases in scores on knowledge items, were used to modify the telephone survey to include more behavior items. The number of knowledge items was decreased, with items eliminated which showed fewest differences between CODE and comparison groups.

In a two-year study it is not possible to judge whether the program impacted the future use of drugs in the families who completed the program. Instead, long-term effects were assessed for only as long as between several months and one and one-half years following the program, and assessed current family practices at that time.

Despite these short-comings, the study has been shown to be understandable by program recipients. The procedure is affordable and can be replicated as the program is disseminated throughout the country. The design also allows future groups around the country, who do their own follow-up studies, to compare their results with those in this study.

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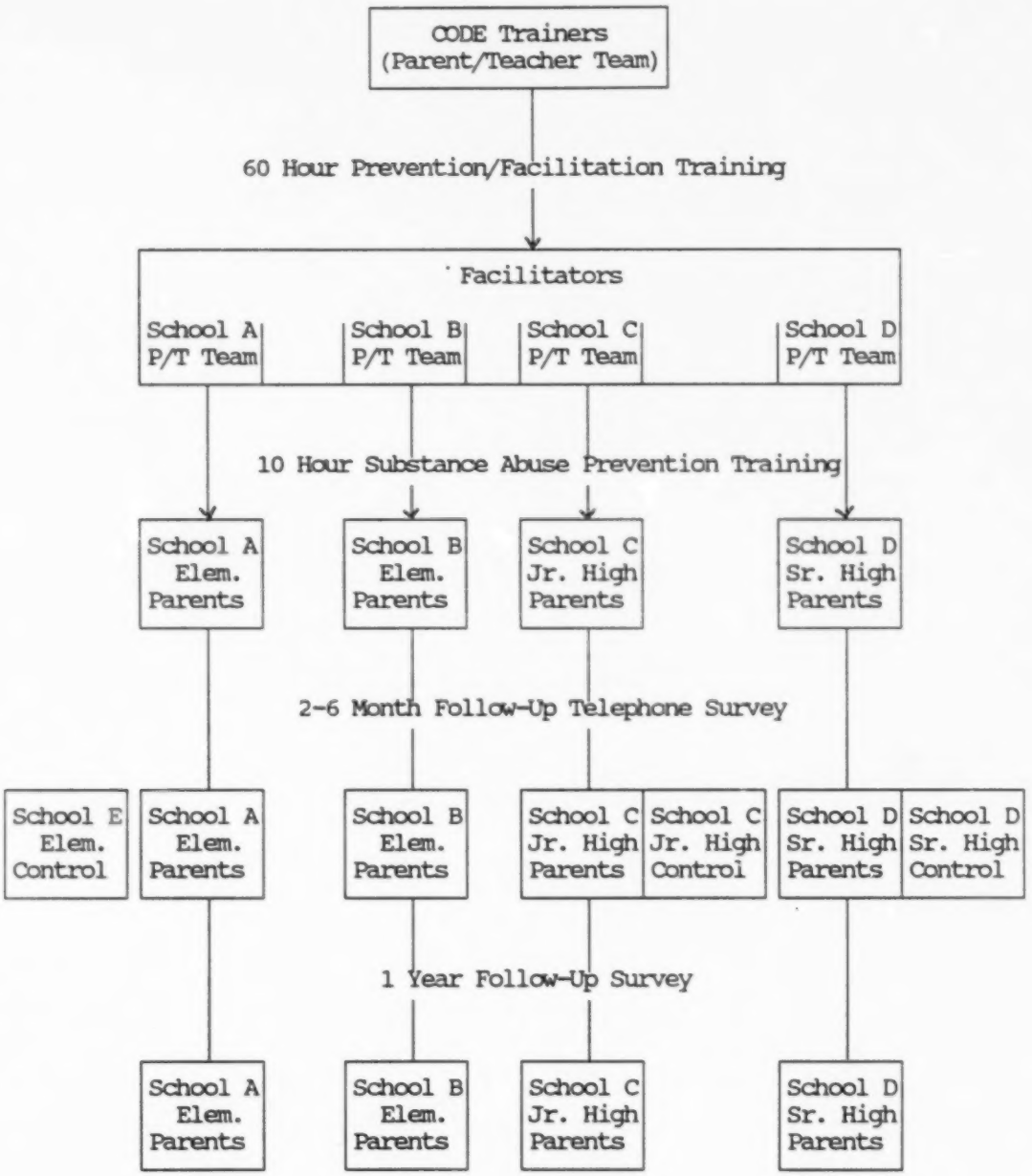
Project CODE Evaluation Design


CODE Trainers
(Parent/Teacher Team)
60 Hour Prevention/Facilitation Training
Facilitators
School A P/T Team
School B P/T Team
School C P/T Team
School D P/T Team
10 Hour Substance Abuse Prevention Training
School A Elem. Parents
School B Elem. Parents
School C Jr. High Parents
School D Sr. High Parents
2-6 Month Follow-Up Telephone Survey
School E Elem. Control
School A Elem. Parents
School B Elem. Parents
School C Jr. High Parents
School C Jr. High Control
School D Sr. High Parents
School D Sr. High Control
1 Year Follow-Up Survey
School A Elem. Parents
School B Elem. Parents
School C Jr. High Parents
School D Sr. High Parents